Chuck Hunt

[*Note: Several names and places may be misspelled]*

Interview conducted by Jim King
Bethel, Alaska
March 30, 1999

Jim: I'm in Chuck's office in Bethel. Chuck has done a lot of looking into the programs of the refuges and how they developed and what programs of the refuge and how his participation in the Yukon Delta Refuge programs developed over the years. I'm hoping Chuck will want to talk about all those items. Chuck, give us a little background on yourself.

CH: I was born in 1944 just north of Kotlik in a small fish camp during the summer and I was raised in a village called Pastolik for quite some time. Until I was about 8 or 9 years old, I didn't attend any formal schooling. We moved to Chaneliak(??) where the BIA school was located and my first schooling started there when I was 8 and 9 and part of 10. In 1955, I went to a BIA school down in Wrangell Institute for the next four summers and then in the fall of 1959, I went to high school at St. Mary's. After graduation from high school I was in the military and then I was with the Army National Guard as their operations and training officer. Sometimes, I was company commander. When the Alaska National Interest Lands Claim Settlement Act was enacted back in 1971, I got interested in that and worked for the Calista Corporation to help village corporations make their land selections. Right after that I began working for Nunam Kitlutsisti(??), which at that time was the environmental arm of the Association of Village Council Presidents. In 1978, late fall, an opening for the Fish and Wildlife Service as a Native liaison was available and I applied for that and got the job. I've been working with Fish and Wildlife since then. I have been living here in Bethel since 1967. It's time for me to retire and go home!

Jim: How did you know what a "liaison" was? Isn't that a French word?

CH: Yes, it is a French word. Really at the time I applied for the job, I didn't quite know what a "liaison" was. I didn't quite know what "Native Liaison" was supposed to do. Neither did the refuge manager know exactly what that person was supposed to do. Most of the things that I did at that time were to interpret during meetings with Native organizations and with people that came to visit the refuge and with meetings out in the villages. That was just about all I did at that time. From 1979 to present, I have been involved in just about everything the refuge has been doing. About 5 or 6 years ago, we finally came up with a position description for a "Native Liaison" for an interpreter and what I am called now, the "Native Contact Representative."

Jim: This is really a program that you developed along with the other refuge people but you were in the hot seat.

CH: Most of the time, yes, I have to work a lot of times in between. I am the middle man most of the time between the Fish and Wildlife Service, Native organizations, and with people out in the villages, making sure, first of all the FWS has a good understanding of how people feel about certain issues, policies, rules, regulations of the Fish and Wildlife Service. At the same time, I have to make an effort to have FWS understand as to how Yup'ik people in the villages feel based on their tradition, their culture, and the way they do tings out in the villages on certain rules, regulations, and policies that FWS has. A lot of time, I work to bring both of their ideas together because I found that most of what conservation is all about in managing wildlife and managing refuges, federal lands, etc., is exactly the same idea that Native people have, not only in the Y-K Delta, but all over the State of Alaska and all over the world, for that matter.

Jim: Chuck, I was going to ask you about Pastolik, isn't that the place where the old dredge is also called the north mouth of the river? I used to stop there and gas up when I was headed for Nome. I would leave the cans.

CH: Yes, that was where I grew up most of my young years until I was about 9 years old. After the cannery season was over in Kwiguk with the Northern Commercial Company, we used to come back to our fish camp at Bill Moore Slough and then we would have to go back to Pastolik and pick up other supplies for drying fish. When we got to Pastolik, we would notice there would be two or three 5-gallon tin cans that someone left over there and we would appreciate those because we would use them for our gas cans.

Jim: That was long before we met.

CH: Yes. That was something that we looked forward to every summer. We would say, "somebody left 5-gallon cans."

Jim: I would always open them carefully because I knew the people there valued them very much.

CH: Yes, at that time, many of the outboard motors didn't come with the free gas tanks that most of the outboard motors have today. When you buy the gasoline the cost was included with the gas can, so whenever we could find any free gas cans, those were appreciated very much.

Jim: Good. I'm glad to hear who got them. I've been around there a little and met George Butler. You worked for him, didn't you?

CH: When we worked at the cannery, he was in charge of all of the Northern Commercial Company stores out of St. Michael out of Chignik(??) and Hamilton, Kwigluk, and Sheldon Point. He was in charge of the cannery over in the Salt Tree in Sheldon Point. I did a lot of work for him and then when we got through with the cannery work, a lot of the supplies that were coming through to all of the Lower Yukon Villages and villages all the way up to Holy Cross, the Northern Commercial Company had barges that took them all out to the villages. Hamilton was the location where we would take all the supplies and separate them into village groups and lots of long shoring was done all the was through about the middle of August.

Jim: Was Edgar Cowlings(??) one of the guys running a boat there?

CH: Yes, Edgar Cowlings ran the boat, called *Mildred* for many, many years. When all the Black River navigation took over, I guess he retired at that time.

Jim: I used to know him when he was in Caltag. In the wintertime, we would stop in at his store there. He was one of the people that had run a leg of the Nome serum run.

CH: Yes, I didn't know that Edgar had been one of the dog team runners when there was an epidemic in Nome until way, way later when I finally realized, or when they talked about the Iditarod trail. I didn't know that he had been one of the heroes that saved people in Nome at that time.

Jim: He was quite a guy. He really liked to trap beaver. That is what I really remember about him.

CH: Yes, he was pretty much in charge in taking care of the long shoring and working out of Hamilton to make sure that all of the supplies get to, not only the Northern Commercial stores but to also to separate stores in Alukonuk(??) and over into Mountain Village, St. Mary's, Marshall, and all the way up to Holy Cross. I think they may have gone further up to maybe to Anvik and Grayling. I'm not exactly sure.

Jim: Perhaps a more important part of the country back in those days than the Bethel area was for awhile.

CH: Yes, for awhile, I think that St. Michael was the center of transportation of equipment and food supplies and things like that for many, many years until Bethel became an air transportation and waterway center, sometimes probably back in the late 60's and early 70's. Now most of the waterway transportation, barges, and things like that are being taken care of by Yutana Bartline (??) line, straight out of Fairbanks for all of the villages to the mouth of the Yukon River from Fairbanks.

Jim: To get back to the Fish and Wildlife Service, there was a station at Marshall. I understood that was built around 1934 and there was a game agent there at that time and he was probably most interested in fur. He would have been one of the "fur wardens" of that period. Then in the late 40's, there was a guy named Paul Adams stationed in one of those houses there. Did you know anything or hear stories about him?

CH: I had not heard anything about game wardens until at one time my father and some of the older men in the village had talked about game wardens and that it was illegal to take ducks and geese in the springtime. I had not heard of that person other than a U.S. Marshall being located at Fortuna Ledge(??), which is called Marshall now. Also there was a Justice of the Peace where court was held for people that had misbehaved.

Jim: Paul Adams wasn't a pilot and he didn't stay there very long. I asked one of the fellows downstairs, the one from Marshall. He was familiar with that house and knew that it had been a Fish and Wildlife house but then it was turned into part of the school. He said he had classes in there when he was a kid.

CH: The only thing that I remember about Fish and Wildlife Service was when we went to the Northern Commercial Company cannery at Kwiguk. There were FWS people that worked on research of the king salmon that were being taken. I remember seeing the Goose land out by the float dock that Northern Commercial Company had. Alaska Airline Norseman airplane would come in there and land and take off, dropping off orders from Sears Roebuck, mail, and things like that. The plane, I think it was a Goose that use to land there and let off the fisheries biologist that would do studies on king salmon. I got interested in their work and a lot of times I would go see him in the evening and look at how they were aging salmon by looking through the scope they used to project the scales of fish and they would be counting the circles and stuff. They showed me how they were doing all of that and how they were tagging fish and things like that. That's the only time that I ever had any contact with FWS.

Jim: I think there were some biologists that had a little house rented there when they were working on the Rampart Dam studies to look at the fish coming up the river. Do you remember that?

CH: I think so. I got to be friends with one of the fisheries biologist that worked there. I think there were four of them there. After the cannery kind of fell into the Yukon River, I think in 1961, I'm not exactly sure, during the spring flood, I didn't see anymore FWS people until I started working with them in 1979.

Jim: Well, that was quite awhile ago. I remember stopping there one time and those guys had rented a little house. They asked the cannery manager, Axel Johnson, to build an "outhouse." Axel got someone to build it for them and they put it right on the riverbank out in front of the house where everybody walked back and forth.

CH: Yes, I remember. It was right along the bank, right in front of the walkway there. I think they were playing a trick on those guys. It was about 50 yards from the house. That is a long walk!

Jim: Gordon Watson was involved in that some. I don't think he stayed there but I remember seeing him there one time. That was a bit before the refuge started here. That was 1960-61 when we finally got the refuge going. We didn't have a very good P-R program when I was here. It was just me but I know that you had some really interesting times trying to convince people that it was alright to work for the Fish and Wildlife Service. Isn't that right?

CH: I think that I was probably the second Native liaison. Jimmy Akaran was the first one and he went to school after working with the Fish and Wildlife Service for about two years here in Bethel. It wasn't an easy job for Jimmy. Really, I don't think it was of his calling to be a Native liaison because I remember he was shaken up pretty bad after they had a meeting down at Kwigluk (??) and I was working with Nunam-Kitlutsisti(??) at that time and he told me that it was pretty rough. After he moved, I guess the refuge

manager at time was, Don Frickie, was there for about a month after I was hired, before Charles Strickland. Don reminded me of a Scotchman because most the cloths he wore had some Scottish tint to them.

I can understand why Jimmy left and decided that he was not going to work in that type of position anymore because there were a lot of times that our own people threatened me because I was working for the Fish and Wildlife Service. They thought that I had turned against my own Yup'ik people and a lot of times they would ask me questions as to why I was working for FWS. They thought I had turned against them. A lot of times when we had meetings out in the villages, they threatened to do harm to me and, gosh, I didn't know where I belonged for a long time. I didn't know how to answer people that threatened me the way they did. I had a lot of heartaches over that but after awhile, it became a challenge to me that after I understood the thoughts and ideas about conservation that the Yup'ik people have and the FWS were very much the same. I wanted to convey that to the people out in the villages and let them understand that FWS was not out there or the refuge was not created for the purpose of taking away their subsistence hunting and fishing and gathering or their Native way of life. It was, in essence, to preserve all of that. I wanted to convey that to the people in the villages and I battled on and on. A lot of times, I was the only one taking care of or traveling to 42 villages which encompassed the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. In 1983 we decided we needed to go to the villages and inform them of the new Yukon Delta Refuge that was created under Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. We started the program called "The Refuge Information Technician Program." Ever since then, I have been sitting in this office. Occasionally, I go out if it gets to be a tough situation or if it looks like it may be tough, I do go out to the villages and have meetings with them.

Jim: It is certainly nice for me to hear you describing that just the way you did because when I applied for the refuge manager's job here, I was told that there was a lot of animosity and my feeling was "well it was a misunderstanding, that there really is no difference in the major interest of the refuge division and the people out here." It is protection of habitat and protection of the resource and it is entirely different than management by any other agency or private company would be. It is really right in line with how people feel. It is more of a misunderstanding than a real conflict so is nice to hear you arrived at the same conclusion.

CH: The other thing that, after traveling out to the villages and listening to people reactions to many of the issues and policies and rules and regulations that the FWS has on how to manage waterfowl, how to manage other wildlife, how to manage the refuge. When we presented these issues, I came to realize that they have a human reaction, not a Yup'ik reaction, but a human reaction. At these different meetings down in California and Washington, Oregon, and some other places through law enforcement training, the refuge academy and listen to many different areas, people's reactions to different types of policies, rules, regulations, I came to realize that even the Yup'ik people reacted the same way as the people reacted down in Louisiana or Florida or California. It is the same thing. I came to realize that no matter where you go, you have a human reaction to issues that people have to deal with.

Jim: That is a very good concept; much more comfortable than a "them-us" concept which is difficult to work with.

CH: For many, many years it was very difficult to explain many of these concepts in wildlife management that FWS has or any state organization has about wildlife management. It took a long time for people to understand. First of all, they needed to know "why – why are these people doing this to us." That was the usual reaction for people but once they started to understand the concept of wildlife management and know that they are not being threatened or is not a detriment to their way of life and their cultural tradition and things of that sort, they began to accept those concepts and work out some of the problems. Looking at the Hooper Bay Agreement, that took a long time for people to accept that. When we talked about the steel shot transition from lead shot, I didn't think that when I made a resolution for the Waterfowl Conservation Committee to accept that when people out in the villages go hunting for ducks and geese in the spring time, that they use a non-toxic shot such as steel shot. I thought that they would not accept that. I thought it was a little too early to present that to the Waterfowl Conservation Committee. What we did, was we traveled out to the villages and had a resolution to support that idea from the villages.

I was really surprised that 35 of the 42 villages supported that and as soon as the Waterfowl Conservation Committee saw these 35 village resolutions supporting the villages, they immediately said, it is going to the Y-K Delta Goose Management Plan. A lot of those things have changed from 1979 and further back to the point where people have a better understanding of the concepts that Fish and Wildlife Service has in conservation of wildlife resources. It took a long time to do this. We had information and education programs so that people would have a better idea of why we do things the way we do.

Jim: When they understand, they then want it to work, isn't that right?

CH: Yes, probably the Yukon Delta Refuge has more Native employees working for them than any other refuge in the State of Alaska, maybe in the whole United States. We have more Natives working for Fish and Wildlife Service either as full time, part time, or contract such as the Conservation Committee.

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Jim: We are continuing with the interview with Chuck Hunt in his office in Bethel. We have been talking about the process of the people of the Yukon Delta and the refuge area, learning to understand about the problems of conservation and how the programs of the refuge can actually benefit people, and are not committed to taking away from people. Is that substantially correct, Chuck?

CH: Yes. From the time I started working in 1979, like I said earlier, there were quite a number of people that work with the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge and once in awhile, one of the refuge information technicians would get a job in some other organization. The Yukon Delta Refuge has been kind of a training and learning experience for a lot of these refuge information technicians and other positions like bio-techs and maintenance people. It is a learning experience for them and a lot of times other organizations would like to hire those types of people because we have trained them. When a job position opens with like a refuge information technician, I use to get maybe, when I first advertised the position, I would get three applicants at the most. Last year when one of the positions opened and I advertised it, I think I had 35 applications for that one position all the way from practically all of the villages in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta so that shows us that Native people are interested in working for the Fish and Wildlife Service, whereas when I applied and started working here, they said "why are you working against us?" Today, when people ask me why I am working for the Fish and Wildlife Service, I have a better answer. I say, "they pay me good."

Jim: Well, it is only a matter of time until a Yup'ik person will be a refuge manager here, or maybe even Regional Director in Anchorage, don't you think?

CH: I think we are heading in that direction at the present time. We are starting to have more young people interested in going to college and taking majors in wildlife management, waterfowl biology, and wildlife biology. I think that two or three people that are from Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta have degrees in wildlife biology and probably have degrees in wildlife management. It is not going to be too long in the future, that hopefully, one of them will be the refuge manager of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. I would like to see that very much because what is going to happen is that people out in the villages will recognize that Native person and connect with them much more so than they would a non-Native person. It will help in managing the refuge, managing the waterfowl and other wildlife in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta.

Jim: That would be neat. It seems like the refuge has the promise of being one of the important employers on the Yukon Delta in the future.

CH: I think it is heading in that direction and I hope that it continues. Establishing trust with people in the villages didn't take overnight. It took a long, long time. It took a lot of work, not only on the part of the refuge managers and the staff but it also took a lot of work to show that we are not out there to stop them from subsistence hunting and fishing and other activities. We needed the Native employees who people out in the villages have a little bit more trust toward than a non-Native to explain many of the

concepts that the refuge and Fish and Wildlife Service has. That has made a lot of difference and I think that if we continue to work that way, people are going to continue to establish better working relations and trust with the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Jim: I got the feeling in looking up some things about the original Treaty that the people that worked on that were really in a panic about what was happening to birds all over North America. Some of the birds that had been really well known and popular, the swans were one with the trumpeter more so than the tundra swans, but the big Canada geese that nest down in the Lower 48 and the wood ducks – they had lost the passenger pigeons and they had lost the Eskimo curlew, which was the most abundant shorebird – they were just gone. The people working then in bird conservation were really worried and then you look and say, "well, since that time, the number of people in North America has more than doubled and yet for some reason the number of people just doing little things for birds has worked and we haven't lost any more species and lots of them are coming back. I'd say that the people in the Yukon Delta are an important part of that process and they ought to feel good when they forego things that are described in the Hooper Bay Agreement, saving an emperor goose or saving an eider nest or whatever, that they are part of a pretty exciting process.

CH: Yes, I think that once people work together to do conservation work, we have a tremendous result. Back in 1984, the population of cackling Canada geese were down to 26,000 birds. From 1984 until 1987, because people were willing to work together, the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta people, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Fish and Wildlife Service, all the way down to Washington, Oregon, and California, they were all willing to work together and in 1987, their population was well over 200,000 birds. Dennis Ravling who did studies on cackling Canada geese out of Old Chevak some time ago, God bless his soul, we were having a meeting and he made projections as to what the populations within ten years of 1984 would be for cackling Canada geese. He was not very far off in his projections. He said if people are willing to work together on this, that is the way it is going to look. He made that presentation to the Waterfowl Conservation Committee and the California State Department of Fish and Game in Washington and Oregon. I look at that and say that he was not very far off but his prediction was a little lower than 200,000 but he had a foresight of that.

Jim: That is neat. Isn't there people out here that had that kind of feeling too. The people can get together and work on these things. Nora Gwinn was one. Do you know her?

CH: Yes, I have known her very well for many years. When I was in high school, I would play basketball against her son and that is how I got to know her.

Jim: She was the U.S. Commissioner when I first met her. She felt that you have to try these things and people will eventually get together and resolve problems. I always had a lot of respect for her. She was from Tununak, I think.

CH: She was also a magistrate and later on she was also a judge. She retired not too long ago from the court system. A lot of people had a lot of respect for her and the work that she did in actually representing the people in the Y-K Delta.

Jim: She was helpful in getting the refuge headquarters started here and she and her husband, Charlie, were a big help to me when I came out here. Eddie Hoffman was a big help. I think that he basically had the feeling that we could solve problems, we just needed to get to working together and talking together and things will improve. Ray Christiansen was the other one.

CH: Oh, yes, Ray was probably one of the first aerial surveyors in the Y-K Delta. I worked with him. He was part of the original Waterfowl Conservation Committee back in 1984. He worked with us for many, many years and a lot of times when there was some disagreement and things couldn't get done because there was some idea or belief that got the rest of the members WCC stuck. He would sit there and explain to them in Yup'ik what the concept or idea was that they were stuck on and get them going again in the direction that most of the time was the right direction to go.

Jim: He did the flying for Dave Klein when they were doing that first estimate of number of birds that were being taken in the spring out here. That is still kind of a classic report that they did.

CH: Yes, much of what was predicted each year had been based on Klein's 1964 harvest survey report but we have advanced quite a bit from 1964 to the present. We have advanced to a very technical method of taking that information and using it for part of waterfowl management in the Y-K Delta all the way over to the Pacific flyway.

Jim: You have attended quite a few of those flyway meetings, haven't you?

CH: Oh, yes. Probably four or five. I have always enjoyed how waterfowl information is used to make management decisions. I didn't know that for a long time. I used to wonder what the heck all of this gathering of this data of nesting birds, aerial counts, and on and on, and why they were doing this neck banding, late bands, etc. It made a lot of sense when I went to the Pacific Flyway Studies Committee Meeting or to the Pacific Flyway Council Meetings and they used all of that information to make their decisions on how many birds should be taken that year by what state and it was really interesting. I have always been glad that I got to attend those types of meetings because I gathered the information out in _____ with Chris Dau and some of the other waterfowl biologists. Half of the time I didn't know what I was doing and why I was doing it until I had a lot of this explained to me and went down to the Pacific Flyway Council Meetings and finally it dawned on me. It makes sense that this information is very necessary and important in making very good decisions, not only to benefit the resource but also to benefit the people that rely on taking these birds.

Jim: You get the feeling down there in those flyway meetings that other states have the same problem of getting people to understand the need for regulations, the need for being careful and the need for communication. It is really not unique problems out here.

CH: No, it isn't. Like I said earlier, I found out that you need to communicate with people and a lot of times if they don't understand what an issue is and why decisions have to be made, a lot of times they end up protesting any issue or whatever it is out there. They just protest it because they don't know what it is. It is not that they have an understanding of what it is that they are protesting, a lot of times they protest because they don't know what it is. Once they have an understanding of the issue and what type of benefits that they can get from that issue and a lot of times how they can be part of that decision-making process, they like that. Once they have a good understanding, they like to be part of it. They like to be part of the solution and not the problem.

Jim: Fear of change is one of those human characteristics you were talking about.

CH: The Yup'ik people are just a little different in the idea of technological change but human behavior, changing from one belief to another or from one idea to another is something that I think people have fought from all the way from the Aboriginees in Australia to the bushmen in Africa over to South America and just about every place there is. Beliefs are something that is very difficult to battle against. It is almost like if somebody mentions anything about what religion or religious denomination do you belong to – if I say that I am a Catholic, I'm talking to an Assembly of God Protestant, we are going to have a battle in the belief that we have within that religion. If I am going to talk about concepts of wildlife, waterfowl management and I am sitting here talking to a person that does not have a very good understanding of the English language or have not been trained in the English language and ideas about Western concepts of management but have beliefs in the Yup'ik way of doing things like hunting and fishing and ideas of how waterfowl is taken for the purpose of food. You sit down and talk to that person, you are going to have problems. You are going to try and out talk each other as to who is right and who is wrong. It takes time to have people understand that we are not there to take away their livelihood and their beliefs and how they subsist on waterfowl but to take a look at what their concepts are and let them know that those concepts are also the concepts of the Fish and Wildlife Service and let them know that they do coincide.

Jim: Is the Refuge working now on really recording the concepts of cultural things in relation to the birds and wildlife on the refuge and these things you are discussing that they hold dear that we don't really understand?

CH: Much of that has already been done by the schools and by sociologists, anthropologists, and every other kind of "ologists" that there is. Much of it was written in a book called *Innuia, the Spirit of* _____. It has a lot of information about artifacts and masks and hunting equipment used by Yup'ik people and other Native people in Alaska. Many of those beliefs are written in that book and it tells how Yup'ik people and other Native people beliefs are attached to their way of hunting and fishing and gathering. Those are some of the things that a lot of times we have to battle. One of the beliefs is that animals and birds and fish present themselves to you when you are out in a hunting situation. For example, if an emperor, which is closed at the present time for subsistence and sport hunting, presents itself, you have to take it because the bird is presenting itself and if you don't take it, you are not showing any respect to that bird. In the Yup'ik belief that bird is going to go back to other birds and tell the other birds not to go to that hunter because that person does not respect them. The battle goes on. I am trying to teach people that many years ago when we had real harsh winters, a lot of people either died from starvation or were near starvation when the ducks and geese, swans and cranes finally arrived in the spring time and saved them from this near disaster type situations. I tell them, it is our turn to pay respect for birds that have population problems such as emperors, pay that respect back to them because they say that it is our turn to save them. They usually see that as a better picture than to say "these birds are closed!"

Jim: That is a neat concept. I am glad that you explained that to me.

CH: Those are types of beliefs and ideas that the Yup'ik people have that a lot of times that we have to battle. The other belief is that the more you take of an animal, bird, or fish, the more will come back the next time.

Jim: Yes, that is a difficult one to deal with but it sounds like you have figured out a good way to do it.

CH: I think the way I present the concept of paying respect back to the animal, bird, or fish, that saved our ancestors from near disaster is a better approach than to say, "you can't take these birds because their population is too low or because they are closed." That is much more acceptable to pay respect to something that in truth has provided sustenance when our Yup'ik ancestors really needed that sustenance to continue their life. A lot of times I do say that very seriously when I am talking about that idea and I say if it wasn't for that, you and I would not be here today because our ancestors would have not made it.

Jim: We forget how the problems of getting enough food for the family have changed in recent years but it has changed, hasn't it?

CH: It has changed quite a bit the way people think and the way people do things. Technology has changed from kayaks to a 70-150 horse power outboard motors. They are able to get to wherever they want to be within three hours and be back the same day. They don't have to stay overnight because they used to use kayaks and a three hour ride is like two days for them, maybe even more. Instead of using bows and arrows to take birds, now they have automatic shotguns and commercial loads. They are a lot more efficient than they were 100 years ago. Anytime that we are more efficient in the way we take animals, birds, and fish, we have a lot of impact on their populations. These types of concepts of the change that we are going through is constantly being told as to why sometimes the bird populations, fish populations, moose populations are carefully monitored. Otherwise, we could go out there and we could wipe them out in no time at all with all of the efficient equipment that we have at the present time. No only is their belief of Yup'ik we have to battle, we even get to present-day beliefs of the Bible. The training that I got at the Catholic high school at St. Mary's generally comes in handy for that because one time I didn't have any books to read in 1958 when I stayed home before I went to high school. The only book available was the Bible so I read the book from one end all the way to the other because it was the only book that I could read. I enjoyed reading and it told me all kinds of stories. That came in handy. A lot of times people in the villages say "well, God gave us all of these animals and the birds and the fish to do as we pleased." I would say, "now wait a minute, He did say that but He gave us the responsibility of taking care of those

animals, birds, and fish so that we won't wipe them out. The type of training that I got a lot of times came in handy in answering some of their ideas of wildlife management. That has changed quite a bit since 1983. The Y-K Delta people are probably the most informed people of wildlife management concepts and the present day situation of any of the waterfowl, salmon, moose, caribou than any place else maybe in the United States. They are very well informed.

Jim: I wouldn't be surprised. People have always marveled how the people out here know all the names of all the birds and all the plants. They know that because they live with those things.

CH: That is part of their life. They are very close to the land, very close to the animals, birds and the fish and working for the Fish and Wildlife Service. Because I had been trained by my mother and my father ever since I can barely remember about animal behavior, bird behavior, what do they feed and why do they behave at such and such a time of the day or the year or whatever, it made it so doggoned easy to work for the FWS.
Much of that training about waterfowl and other animals, birds, and fish, I had already been trained in. In order to be a hunter, you have to know the behavior of the animal, the bird, or the fish. Otherwise, you are not going to be able to get any of the animals, birds or fish. You have to know when they are most available, when they are the most stupidest, and that type of thing. It was a lot more easier for me to work with FWS because those behaviors in animals, birds and fish, I already had knowledge of. That is what we work with, animals, birds and fish in managing and studying them have a lot to do with their behavior when they migrate.

--end of side 2, tape #1—
--start of side 1, tape #2—

Jim: Continuation of interview with Chuck Hunt about the affairs of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge in which he has had a large personal affect on events that are occurring here now. Chuck, do you want to say a few words about the future and where you think the people of Western Alaska are headed?

CH: First of all, I think with all of the work that we have been doing with our information and education programs, we use just about every technique to get the word across to people. We believe that a well-informed person out in the villages will probably make the best decisions. A lot of times any of the people that have to make decisions in the Y-K Delta, it has to do with wildlife management issue. This is what the people out in the villages depend on and because of what we have seen in the Y-K Delta Goose Management Plan and people working together. We also have seen people take things into their own hands and have seen that there is a problem and doing something about it in a positive manner.

For example, the 5-year moose-hunting moratorium on the Lower Yukon was done by the village leaders on their own at the mouth of the Yukon River. They did this all on their own and came up with the Lower Yukon Moose Management Plan. We had problems with the Kuskokwim Mountains caribou herd. People took that upon themselves to work together based on the Goose Management Plan and worked on that. We had problems with brown bear and they worked together with the Fish and Wildlife Service, Fish and Game, and Native leaders from all over the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta. Eventually all of this has lead to the Migratory Bird Treaty Amendment so that people can take ducks and geese in the springtime.

More and more people are willing to work as staff on the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge or with Fish and Wildlife Service. More and more people are interested in getting a degree in wildlife management, biology, and those types of things. I think that the Yukon-Kuskokwim people are much more advantaged in the area of wildlife management because of the information and education programs that we have done. I think that this is going to continue on as the people are going to continue to be well informed. I can see in the future that they are going to make wise decisions on how wildlife is managed in the Y-K Delta. I can see that because more and more young people are interested in management of wildlife. You will see more professional Yup'ik people work for the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and in their own Native organizations. I can see that there are going to be a lot more professional types of Yup'ik people involved in managing. I think this is very, very wise. The more that people can become involved in these types of management positions, I think it is going to have a

lot of built up self-esteem. People are going to be proud of who they are. They are going to be proud that they are part of the process.

When I look back in the 1960's when the colored people were protesting for their civil rights, a lot of times they were out there demonstrating with clinched fists and things of that nature but today they control the sports in basketball, football, and you name it. They are in top positions of organizations. They are in Washington as senators and representatives. They are mayors. You don't hear them too much protesting as to who is supposed to have rights and who is supposed to not have rights. You see some of that in Native people in Alaska. They are talking about sovereignty. I believe that Native sovereignty is a state of mind. I really feel that once people get a good education and have good positions with the state and federal government and things of that nature, then people begin to feel very proud of who they are. Because they are in powerful positions they are able to make decisions not only for everybody else but for their own people too. I can see that happening in the future. It is already happening today but I see more of it in the future. When that happens, I think people become much prouder of who they are and the accomplishments that they have done in the past to get to where they are. I believe that once we get there, that is sovereignty. I believe that that is sovereignty, it may not be Native sovereignty, it may not be western sovereignty but it is sovereignty in itself; something that people really feel proud of.

Jim: Chuck, every now and then you hear racist remarks about the Alaska Natives and I always answer that with "hey, Alaska Natives have been among the best behaved citizens anywhere in the United States." In all these periods where we have had college riots, labor riots, race riots, and on and on, the Alaska Natives have quietly been working with our system to develop a quality and their participation and I really think that is a tremendous credit to the Native population and I hope they feel that themselves.

CH: I think that a lot of times it has to do with what they were taught by their parents many years ago and the way to resolve situations. I was taught by my parents that it's not cool to be angry and get even with the person that hurt either my feelings or stole my kayak or took things without asking me but to go over and sit down and talk with that person and tell them that what they did to me hurt and is it possible that somehow or another that you might be able to repay me for what happened. That concept was brought to upbringing of children. If either my daughter or my son broke something, I didn't scold the heck out of them and ground them for the next three weeks and they couldn't watch TV or couldn't do this or that, I would go and sit down and talk to them and explain to them that what happened was wrong and they have respect for me. They had already punished themselves anyway by thinking, "oh, no, I broke my dad's car or I messed up his snow machine" and just thinking about what all is going to happen to them is already a punishment in itself. Why punish them more but to explain why to them it was wrong. If they lied, I would sit down and talk to them and ask them "why" and that telling the truth is better. That type of thing, I think, has made Native people much more easier to work with because of that idea of how they were brought up as children, knowing what was wrong, what was right, and to be patient in reaching a goal or a solution to a problem.

Jim: So often we don't give the Native community credit for that approach but I can see where you have used that training that you described getting as a child to benefit the refuge program enormously.

CH: At first I didn't think quite that way. I got frustrated as to why can't people understand immediately as to why the concept of the Fish and Wildlife Service in wildlife management is the right way to go. It took a long time. It took a lot of growing on my part too, listening to people as to what they are saying and to respect what they said instead of saying "well, your idea about how to do this is wrong." Finally, it dawned on me that people have different ideas of how to resolve a situation or a problem. There is not just one way to solve a problem, there are billions of ways to resolve a problem. It was that that probably made me just a little bit more humbler that I needed to listen to what people have to say.

Jim: You need to run for the legislature when you retire from the Fish and Wildlife Service!

CH: You are about the 20th person that has told me that and I am probably going to be ready to retire in about two more years and I have often thought of running for either the House or the Senate when it becomes available. I don't know, that is to far away. It is too far away from the Y-K Delta! If I can work

as close to the Y-K Delta as I can and make contact with people, I've always felt that I can do a better job here than to battle the rains in Juneau.

Jim: Maybe so, I was just thinking in that so much you see now in the legislature now the attitude that "if you don't agree with me, you are out." Somehow that has got to turn around.

CH: It takes a long time to learn how to communicate with people. A lot of times I think people want to push their ideas of how things could be done on other people as much as they can so that they can get their way instead of sitting back and listening and learning not only about the person's ideas but a lot of times learning about your ownself.

Jim: One thing that I felt for my many years working for the government was that the concept of public service and service to other people has declined somewhat and people have a more selfish attitude about "what's in it for me and when am I going to get paid." Do you get any sense of that with the Fish and Wildlife Service?

CH: Sometimes people ask me to do something and I say "how much are you going to pay me?" They then turn around and look at me and say, "well, you are a Yup'ik person, you are not supposed to react that way, where did you learn that from?" I say, "white people." I learned that from white people because anytime you do something in the western culture ways of doing things, you ask for pay so I ask for pay. I ask for maybe a higher position in my GS grade so I can get more pay for doing the things that I do. I think that working with people and providing service and when you can see that people are understanding better the concepts that Fish and Wildlife Service has in wildlife management and you can see that they are working together to resolve a common problem, that in itself is a gratification or satisfaction that you have done the job the best way you know. You have brought people together to understand each other. That to me is more of a reward than I would ever get in cash money.

Jim: That is a good thought. I like the spirit of public service. I think it was more part of life at the end of World War II. Shortly after, when I started working for the government when I was in the Service you could get a lot of things out of life without making a lot of money. If you wanted to make a lot of money, you went into business but if you were going to work for the government, you had other compensations and satisfactions.

How are we going to support all these growing villages in the future?

CH: It has probably become worse in the last five years because many of the villages depend on commercial salmon fishing, commercial herring fishing, and some halibut fishing. It has become very difficult because of disasters occurring with populations on the runs of king salmon and chum salmon, not only in the Kuskokwim and the Yukon but also in Bristol Bay. At the same time, the welfare reform has gotten very strict to the point where a lot of people that depended on welfare funds to be able to get their cash has been very strict. At the present time people are looking for jobs. I don't know what it is going to look like within the next 5-10 years but people have been doing things here and there to make some sort of cash. One of the things that has become popular because of the situation that commercial salmon fishing has had, it's the CDQ Program. In the winter time people can go down to Dutch Harbor and work in commercial processing boats and harbors and they go down to Seattle and participate in the bottom fishing, king crab fishing and all those other types of things. That has been very popular for the younger people and a lot of the villages have been successful in sending some of their people to this program. It has helped out with the low cash problems that they have at the present time. It is really supported at the mouth of the Yukon River and probably in all of the coastal and up river villages in the Y-K Delta.

I'm sure people have looked at the possibilities of tourism, bird watching. We have a lot of birds here in the spring, summer, and fall. I'm sure that village corporations could take advantage of that and hire some people to work in that. Tourists now pay probably a minimum of $1,000 per trip just to go and look at something that is unique to the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta that they don't see any place else in the world. Fishermen from the Lower 48 pay $3,000 just to go out and do some fishing for kings, chums, reds. They have never fished for a graying in their life. The village can make money in that type of an operation but

then again, they say, “we don’t want any outsiders to come into our area.” Whether we like it or not, they are already here. The only thing that we can do is set it in such a way that there is only a certain amount of influx of these types of people and have some control over it. If we don’t, somebody else is going to have some control over it or somebody is going to make some money and our own people are going to be shorted out on that. That has already happened too.

Jim: The same thing is happening in Southeast. In Juneau, lots of people are saying that we need to get rid of the tour ships and things that are coming in. They are just wrecking the town.

CH: Yes, but the gift shopkeepers are saying, “we want more of them to come in!”

Jim: Another feature of that that I keep thinking is these tourists are paying and they are having fun. Having fun is not such a bad idea in life.

CH: I have thought about that for a long time. I’ve had anthropologist ask me questions. I have had sociologists ask me questions. Like I said, probably every “ologist” that has come out to study the Yup'ik people have stopped by to talk to me about the knowledge that I have of this location or that village. I have always wanted to someday become an anthropologist and go down to Los Angeles and study their village and ask them questions, like how many times do you go out to the bar, where are your ancestors from, how many salmon do you take per year, do you go hunting, how many dogs do you have and that type of thing. I feel like I have been studied to death.

I think this type of interviewing is good. We need to look at what has happened in the past and see what we have done to progress in a positive way and probably look at what we may be able to do better. It will be much more easier for the future generations to work with the Fish and Wildlife Service. I think we have gone through the bad times already and now we are going through some of the best times in wildlife management that we have ever had.

Jim: Now the technology and the way of acquiring knowledge has really advanced. I’m not interviewing you as a Yup'ik so much as an old timer with the Fish and Wildlife Service. This is my mission.

CH: I have been interviewed so many times as a Yup'ik person. A lot of times, it has gotten to the point where I forget that I am a Yup'ik. I forget that I am a Native person. I have been working with so many different types of people from all over the United States and probably from the World that my concept of a color of the person is no longer there. I only see human beings and once in awhile when I meet someone for the first time they ask me if I am an Alaska Native or an Eskimo, an Athabascan. I have to stop and think for a moment to realize that I am a Yup'ik Eskimo because I totally forget that I am a Yup'ik Eskimo. I am not aware. It took a long time to get to that point but I do know that I am human being.

Jim: That’s important. Someday human beings are going to be more in tuned that way. I think that we are making progress. I was thinking about it the other day. If you go out and back up your car and hit your head and the ambulance comes, you don’t check the color of the driver, you are just glad someone came. If we think more in that way that we can help each other survive in a world that is often difficult and we really do in lots of instances. Hospitals have people from all over the world, of all backgrounds, races. The race prejudice thing is so silly.

CH: It’s because people don’t understand. First of all who they are that’s why there is so much prejudice. If they had a really good understanding of who they are as a human being, a lot of times they have a better understanding of other people. What we need to do is take this “Laundromat of ethnic cleansing” and throw it out. I always call it the “Laundromat of ethnic cleansing.” It is a very bad term. I think that Hitler started all of that and now it has come to other countries that we are having problems with. I think that when people work together on a common problem then they start to see each other as human beings, they don’t see each other as different color of people. They begin to understand that they have the same type of feelings and those feelings are the same no matter where you are in the world. Like I said,

that has taken a long time to have a better understanding of why people react to different issues the way they do. It is because of the beliefs that they have and once you make them understand that whatever issues that you are trying to deal with and find resolutions is not a threat to them but maybe a benefit. They take advantage of it. The Yup'ik people are that way. Any time they can see something that will benefit them in the way they go out hunting, fishing, or do things better, they take advantage of it.
--end of side 1, tape #2—

(end of interview – nothing on side 2)

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